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FROM THE AMERICAN PEOPLE

MADAGASCAR

SUCCESS STORY

Strengthening a Network for Health

Private clinics provide youth-friendly family planning to combat HIV



Photo: PSI/Cara McCarthy

Peer educators gather a group at a local market in Madagascar to talk about STI/HIV prevention. Peer educators share key information with young people and engage them in small group or one-to-one conversations.

“I see a lot of youth my age who are in trouble with drugs and unplanned pregnancy and other risky behaviors, and I want to help them. I feel that being a peer educator, I can help them in ways others can’t,” said John, a peer educator in Madagascar.

Madagascar is one of the last countries in sub-Saharan Africa with an HIV prevalence rate below 1 percent. Surveillance data from the last several years, however, indicate that the rate is increasing, likely due to high rates of sexually transmitted infections (STI) and widely practiced high risk behaviors.

Youth are among those at highest risk of HIV and are a priority for prevention programs. Access to quality reproductive health services for youth is expanding thanks to a network of franchised private health clinics called Top Réseau.

USAID has provided technical and promotional support to 146 Top Réseau clinics in seven cities. Top Réseau providers receive training on youth-friendly family planning counseling and STI diagnosis and treatment. In turn, they agree to provide such services at a price affordable to youth and other high risk groups, including sex workers. Sixteen clinics branded Top Réseau Plus recently integrated HIV voluntary counseling and testing services to meet growing demand for these services. After joining the network, Top Réseau doctors report increased client flows and benefit from the training, promotional materials and support.

The program employs 76 peer educators who discuss STI/HIV prevention and family planning, and promote Top Réseau clinics among youth. John, an exuberant youth peer educator in the city of Antsirabe, is proud of his work as a peer educator. “I see a lot of youth my age who are in trouble with drugs and unplanned pregnancy and other risky behaviors, and I want to help them. I feel that being a peer educator, I can help them in ways others can’t,” he said.

The peer educators reach more than 20,000 youth nationwide each month. The Top Réseau network is making significant strides towards improving access to reproductive health services among those most in need. To date, more than 135,000 youth have visited a Top Réseau clinic for family planning services.

Telling Our Story
U.S. Agency for International Development
Washington, DC 20523-1000
<http://stories.usaid.gov>